

# A Brief Review: Factors that Affect Classroom Participation in the Chinese Language Courses

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## Abstract

College students' classroom participation can improve their learning efficiency and enhance their critical consciousness. But in China, many college students don't do well in class, especially in some common classes. As a public course that is often neglected, Chinese language course needs to pay more attention to how to improve college students' participation in class. This article reviews many factors that influence classroom participation. College students' classroom participation in Chinese language courses is influenced by three factors: students' traits, students' majors and instructors' attitudes. These three factors will constitute different classroom climate, and different classroom climate will affect the classroom participation. Creating a good classroom environment will help students to participate in the learning of the course and improve their grades.

**Keywords:** Classroom Participation, College, Chinese Language Courses

## Introduction

As network technology and multimedia equipment are more and more widely used in the university classroom, the traditional teaching mode in which students are in a passive position to receive knowledge has presented many drawbacks. Ran (2020) believes that the traditional teaching method simply relies on the teacher's explanation and teaching, which puts college students in a passive state in class, limits their critical thinking, and ultimately leads to college students' tired of studying.

The new teaching mode of "student-centered" is becoming popular. Sedova, et al (2019) suggested that a positive link between individual participation and achievement was observed in all students regardless of socioeconomic background or gender. Students who engage in active learning acquire more knowledge than passive learners. This new model emphasizes the participation of students in teaching and believes that the transfer of knowledge is not a unidirectional input but is completed through the interaction between teachers and students. In classroom teaching, teachers must pay attention to the role of

students' existing knowledge and experience, and promote students' main participation, self-reflection, and mutual negotiation in the interaction, to realize the continuous construction of students' knowledge. This is a constructivist view.

Students with high classroom participation are considered active learners and they get a lot of benefits from classroom participation. Classroom participation is generally regarded as an important way for students to master knowledge and cultivate ability. Students who participate also show improvement in their communication skills and group interactions. Classroom participation is also of great help in the formation of students' critical thinking (Oliveira et al., 2020)

The importance of classroom participation has become a consensus in the educational community. Improving classroom participation is an important prerequisite for forming a student-centered teaching model. However, the problem of low student participation in the classroom has been troubling professors. The teachers seem to have a hard time getting the students to talk in the classroom

According to the research of Yang (2020), in Chinese universities, more than 60% of students do not actively participate in class. This situation is more obvious in public courses. Because public courses are not professional enough and get few credits, students often do not pay enough attention to the study of public courses (Zhu, 2020). Students' participation in class is also poor. Although students sit in the classroom, they are still absent-minded, lowering their heads to play mobile phones or do other things unrelated to class, do not respond to the teacher's questions, and even cause the teacher to fail to complete the teaching task. Therefore, providing classroom participation for students in public courses has become an important issue.

### **Problem Statement**

In China, the purpose of university public courses is to let students learn some basic skills and knowledge and to provide assistance for their future professional courses. Public courses include English courses, politics courses, computer courses, mathematics courses, Chinese language courses, and so on. Generally speaking, common courses are offered to students in their first or second year.

In recent years, China's Ministry of Education has issued several policies to encourage the reform of the public curriculum. The main purpose of the reform is to improve the teaching quality of public courses so that college students can devote more energy to public courses. To improve the teaching quality of university public courses, it becomes very important to improve students' classroom participation. But before that, we should find out why students are reluctant to participate in class discussions, that is, to find out the factors that affect college students' class participation.

Many findings have been made in previous studies. For example, class size, student confidence, and teacher attitudes all affect class participation. In small classrooms, students are more willing to participate in class (Ahmad et al., 2020). Confident students and students with low communication anxiety are more willing to participate in class discussions (Akbari et al., 2020). Teacher encouragement stimulates student participation in the classroom (Cayubit et al., 2022). A classroom atmosphere in which students and teachers respect each other leads to greater student participation (Cubit et al., 2022).

In China, some researchers have made a quantitative analysis of the factors that affect public class participation. Zhu (2020) found that classroom participation is related to students'

majors, teachers' teaching concepts, school management, and traditional Chinese culture. The problem of classroom participation is an old and new topic, but there is one thing that has puzzled researchers. The different goals and policies of each university and the wide disparity of methods and variables in these studies have made across-study comparisons difficult. It is not feasible to generalize and apply the research results to classroom participation in all courses. We must look at it on a case-by-case basis.

However, Zhang (2021) argued that the Chinese language course is also an often-neglected subject, with only half of universities offering it compared to some common courses that are mandatory for all universities. In addition, the course objectives and subject nature of this course make it difficult to attract the attention of college students and researchers. College students' participation in Chinese language courses varies greatly, and there is little research on it. This study will integrate domestic and foreign research and find out the factors that affect language classroom participation through case studies. With this knowledge, educators can devise strategies and utilize appropriate tactics to build a responsive classroom climate. The findings of this study will offer a workable guide for encouraging classroom engagement and enhancing the caliber of Chinese language instruction.

## **Literature Review**

### *Social learning theory and classroom participation*

Social learning theories learn value from the stimuli and actions of others and thus adaptively promote individual survival. This type of learning also exists in the classroom environment (De Oliveira et al., 2020). Participation in the circumstances occurs when students are influenced by factors, such as sociocultural, cognitive, affective, linguistic, or the environment and these often lead to student participation and interaction with other students and instructors becoming less and speaking only at appropriate times.

### Factors that Affect Classroom Participation

#### *Logistics*

Logistics include classroom size, grading, course policy, type of course, and many more. According to the research findings Ahmad et al (2020), class size has an impact on class participation, and it is necessary to choose a reasonable classroom size even if the teaching strategy of gamification is used. Classrooms that are too large can reduce participation because there are fewer opportunities for students to participate and students feel that they have no responsibility to participate in class.

In any case, at present, the class size of the Chinese language courses at one College is usually more than 50 students, and the maximum class size is more than 100 students. Judging from the resources of current school classrooms and the teaching safety of students, large classes are not something we can eliminate, so educators must develop ways to encourage students to participate in class discussions. However, in the Chinese course of Jiaying College, all teachers will use the same course policy. In general, the class participation grade will account for 50% of the total grade.

#### *Student Traits*

Multiple studies have shown that students' self-confidence is a major driver of their participation Akbari et al (2020) Confident students are more likely to participate in class, while less confident students avoid speaking up in class.

According to Liu's (2021) research, students' self-confidence and self-esteem will affect class participation. If self-confidence is low, they choose to substitute silence for any class participation. Yang (2020) found that the characteristics of students have a great impact on their type of classroom participation. For example, star students have the highest frequency of class participation, which may be related to their high self-confidence, low class anxiety, and moderate self-esteem. However, the proportion of students who actively participate in the class is not high, only 26.7%. The majority of students are considered "sheep" students, who are not very involved but are easily influenced by the students around them.

Communication anxiety refers to a person's anxiety about real or expected communication with others, which can be reduced through training and course counseling (Rust et al., 2020). Communication anxiety is common in the classroom, and students with high communication anxiety directly refuse to participate in the class. In a study on biology courses, Zhu (2020) have argued that classroom anxiety would continuously affect students' grades and performance.

### *Teacher's Attitude*

Teachers are the organizers and guides of the class. Teachers' attitudes towards class participation will directly affect students' class participation and also affect students' class participation through their influence on the classroom climate. Zhu (2020) believes that some teachers of public courses are still backward in their teaching concepts. They are not willing to communicate with students in class or provide students with opportunities to participate in class. In these public classrooms, no matter whether multimedia teaching technology is used or not, students are still in a passive position in essence, with little class participation.

Liu (2021) also believed that in a public class with too many students, some teachers are keener to focus on lecture-based methods and are unwilling to carry out classroom interaction to improve teaching efficiency. It can be said that the teacher's attitude towards classroom participation is an important factor in the success of a class. Classroom participation will be greatly hindered if teachers fail to change old ideas and focus on students and instead turn the classroom into their one-man show.

### *Major*

College students' majors play a significant role in how they learn and grow professionally, particularly in the setting of Chinese education. Before taking the college admission exam, Chinese students must make a basic decision regarding their major, and it can be difficult for them to switch majors. Students in high school who desire to major in the humanities will attend liberal arts classes, while students who prefer to major in science will attend science classes. Another distinct group of high school students who study art, music, or physical education take a unique college entrance exam that emphasizes relevant professional skills over scores in other areas. These students struggle academically because they may devote a lot of time to developing their drawing abilities or participating in track and field training. But in either case, the university and major to which they are admitted will ultimately depend on their performance on the college admission exam.

Because Chinese universities pay more attention to their artistic standards when admitting art majors, who may perform poorly in other subjects, sports majors have similar problems. On the other hand, liberal arts students and science students have obvious differences in thinking mode and learning habits due to the reason of classification. Several studies in China have shown that a student's major affects class participation.

In a study on the phenomenon of classroom silence, Liu (2020) found that students majoring in science were most likely to be silent in class, and their class participation rate was the lowest, while liberal arts students performed better and art students performed the best.

The mediating role of classroom climate

The classroom climate is one of the most important elements influencing classroom involvement. It has been consistently demonstrated that creating a supportive climate increases engagement, and it is strongly advised that academics attempt to create such an environment in a variety of ways.

Ryan et al (2019) used four standard scales, including classroom environment in colleges and universities, learning motivation, and learning strategies, to confirm the importance of learning environment. The learning environment affects the participation behavior of college students and is closely related to their achievements.

Shu (2019) believed that by creating a free and open teaching and interactive environment with mutual trust, students can be promoted to obtain higher-order learning of "application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation." This kind of atmosphere is also an important prerequisite for cultivating students' innovation ability and team communication ability.

The shaping of the classroom atmosphere is closely related to several factors, including the characteristics of students and the attitude of teachers. Student characteristics, including whether they feel confident in the classroom setting to complete tasks initiated by the teacher and whether they have communication anxiety, can create different classroom climates.

Cayubit (2022) found that in class, if teachers allow students to speak actively, students will be motivated and they will be inclined to show their ideas to their peers. The teacher's guidance will promote a good classroom environment. They will give students specific tasks to promote their participation in the class. This gives students a sense of direction in terms of what to do inside the classroom.

To sum up, college students' classroom participation in Chinese language courses is influenced by three factors: students' traits, students' majors and instructors' attitudes. These three factors will constitute different classroom climate, and different classroom climate will affect the classroom participation. This process is illustrated in Figure 1.

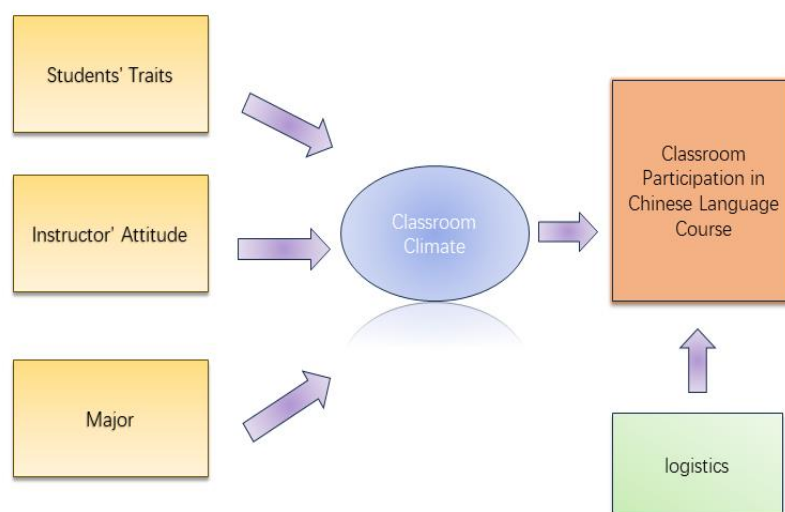


Figure 1

This study complements the social learning theory that students are influenced differently in the classroom environment, thus affecting their participation in Chinese language courses. Teachers can also learn more about how students feel about classroom participation. This research will help teachers create a more participatory, performance-enhancing university classroom environment.

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